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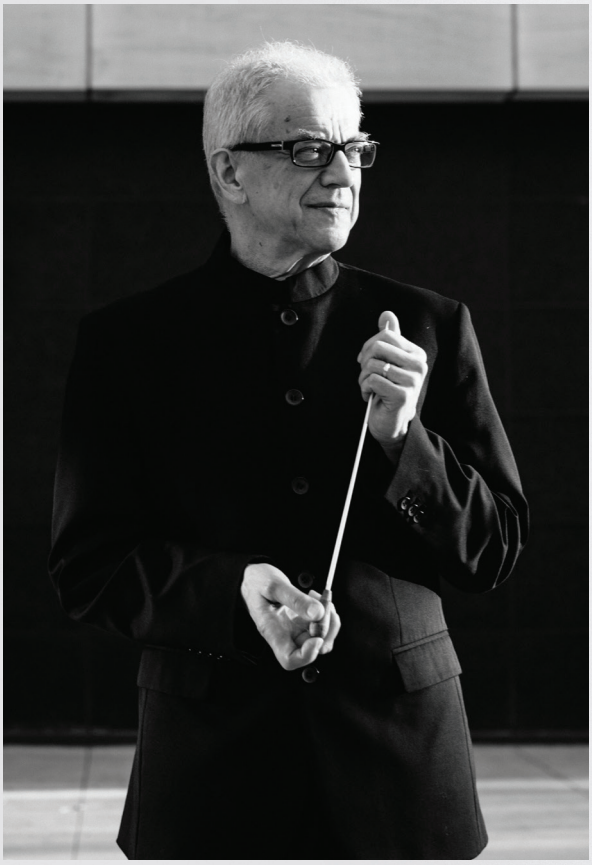

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CONTENTS

LAVENDER

ISSUE 686 SEPTEMBER 9-22, 2021

Page 10: Photo by Eye On Fetish - © 2021 Gerry Koehler, Page 14: Photo by Mike Hnida, Page 28: Photo courtesy of Tito Alvarez

Available on LavenderMagazine.com with Exclusive online only content.

Fall Arts & Entertainment

16 East Central MN Pride
20 Channeling That Inner Fire
24 St. Paul Art Crawl

ON THE COVER
Seven Bailey. Photo by Cyril Davis

OUR LAVENDER

8 From the Editor
9 A Word in Edgewise
31 Lavender Lens

OUR SCENE

10 Rubber Ball USA
12 Coming Attractions
14 Eat The Menu

OUR LIVES

26 Serve Our Society

OUR HOMES

28 Our Rides

OUR RESOURCES

32 Community Connection
33 The Network

OUR VOICES

34 Skirting The Issues
34 Jamez Sitings

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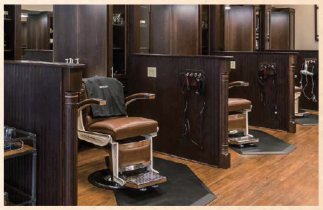

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FROM THE EDITOR | BY ANDREW STARK

On the Masculinity Myth

"Human nature, like God," writes Carolyn Merchant in *The Death of Nature* (1980), "consisted of a unity of equal male-female principles." The goal, and therefore the answer to many of the world's problems, I believe, is for men to get in touch with their feminine sides, to transcend, to free themselves from the shackles of masculinity alone—to achieve spiritual equilibrium, or androgyny of the soul. Why? Because consciousness is feminine. This means that, by proxy, it is the *feminine* that is present, patient, nurturing, which plants the tree. In accordance with the gnostics of the first and third centuries A.D., German Renaissance philosopher Paracelsus wrote that "[w]oman is like the earth and all the elements and in this sense she may be considered a matrix; she is the tree which grows in the earth and the child is like fruit born of the tree…" And, as history has shown us, the *masculine* drops the tree and considers its use to him. Both are vital.

I come from an isolated region, where most of the 1,200 impoverished residents are remote as abyssal fish. Some of these men, but certainly not all, can be racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, pugnacious and/or jingoistic, raising their own boys within the same toxic contexts—this, of course, is hereditary and systemic, and they lack the tools and experience to believe otherwise. (It should be noted that there are misogynistic women as well, but that's another discussion altogether. Also, this is not a critique of men and masculinity, but toxicity.) Brute strength and endurance—in the woods, on the field/ice rink—is a currency. Men do not talk about their feelings; they hit each other. Because of this and a number of other factors, I developed into a person about as emotionally available as a fire hydrant. But I've been working on it. How? By getting in touch with my feminine side.

This has not only become a pop culture cliché; it's become a punch line. But our ideal self balances the tightrope between yin (female) and yang (male)—aligned with dialectical monism, that confluence of duality and unity. It was rocky at first; I didn't have the tools to even know how to begin. I tried yoga, but it's tough to balance your chakras when your entire body is trembling and there's sweat dripping off the tip of your nose. Meditating helps, but years of social media and TV have warped my attention span. I started to wonder what my feminine side even meant. Did I need to *act* gentler? More nurturing? Sure. My personality tends to be rigid and isolate. But, like many things, I didn't find it until I quit searching.

I was walking my dogs in the woods, which is how I spend most of my free time, and it struck me: peace, stillness, total presence. I wasn't thinking about the past or worrying about the future. I wasn't really thinking about anything, but rather *experiencing* the world in real time. I looked at my dogs then, and they had literally stopped to smell the flowers.

Men must learn to be like the women in their lives: gentle, compassionate, analytical, vulnerable, strong. (These are generalizations, to be sure, and based upon my own personal experiences and observances.) They must abandon the myth of the testosterone-fueled omnipotent man, who can be unpredictable and knee-jerk as an unneutered dog—that same man who inflicts violence upon men, women, children and animals; who scalps the earth of her forests, and mines her depths, or, as Pliny wrote, "We trace out all the veins of the earth […] We penetrate into her entrails, and seek for treasures…" Men must learn to love nature, to love themselves and others, and to talk about their feelings—there's a reason men in the U.S. are about four times more likely to commit suicide than women. Masculinity alone can be hazardous, poisonous, and femininity is the antidote. In other words, *masculine* and *feminine* are not polarities, but different currents in the same river. ∎

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A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

Another "Sorry" Situation

Some people can say egregious things and be remembered warmly for decades, quoted with a chuckle like Yogi Berra's sage advice, "Always go to other people's funerals, otherwise they won't come to yours."

Others may be as egregious, but so obviously self-serving, so chilling as to stop one dead in one's tracks. The soon-to-be former governor of New York's meager apology to the 11 women who accused him of physical impropriety is an outstanding example.

In summation, he said, "In my mind I've never crossed the line with anyone. But I didn't realize the extent to which the line has been redrawn. There are generational and cultural shifts that I just didn't fully appreciate. And I should have no excuses."

He knew there was a "line," but as long as it wasn't in his mind it didn't count? Is the line he has in his mind the old one where the woman—co-worker, underling, stranger—has in her mind that she mustn't complain lest she not be believed, or perhaps lose her job?

He wasn't in swaddling clothes or unaware during the Anita Hill – Clarence Thomas hearings of 1991. And which times have changed? Only the past three decades? Back before women won the vote in 1920? Certain lines have scarcely deviated since the Americans-to-be purportedly set foot on Plymouth Rock. Not just for women, but for anyone else considered "not the right sort."

Estimates state that in 1492 there were likely some 60 million natives in the "new" country, and in the 1700s, approximately six hundred tribes dotted the land with their particular cultures and dialects—hunting, growing crops, worshiping their gods.

Their way of life was doomed once the newcomers discovered a land rich in game, arable land, and the promise of gold. In exchange they brought firearms, firewater and smallpox, and military leaders the likes of George Armstrong Custer and Andrew Jackson who drew lines in their own minds detailing the treatment of others.

These men offered no apologies, none of the self-justification that this future art, crafted and honed with sinuous twists that point blame back on the victim(s). Which brings us back to that recently-ex governor and his "All-I-dids" and "I-didn't-knows" and "She misunderstoods."

Years ago, too many to cite the source, I read a piece written by a medical professional who dealt with abused children. During one interview, he reported, he asked a seven-year-old boy how he knew whether a touch or hug was "good" or "bad." The child replied, "One gives and the other takes."

Perhaps an adult, about to place hands on another, co-worker or stranger, should ask, "Am I giving, or am I taking?" Is this clasp of a shoulder in praise of a job well done, or a slow predation sliding towards some more private part of the recipient? Am I celebrating with, or stealing from, claiming some part of that person for myself?

Local children's book author David LaRochelle recently published *How to Apologize*, aimed at the three to seven set. I congratulated him, kidding, "You should write a version for adults!" Now I fear David's clear, humorous text may be too complex. ∎

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Photo of Joseph "MN Joe" Tran by V. Paul Virtucio

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My Safe Word Is Onomatopoeic: Fast Times at Rubber Ball USA

After watching a grown man willfully disrobe in front of a gathering group of strangers, most of whose body parts that would normally be covered are now mostly uncovered—beneath pasties, G-strings, tiny swatches of neoprene—and after watching this man, down to his red boxer briefs, get shackled to a large wooden X-cross by a woman clad in an abbreviated latex sun dress, I think about my dogs. It's been raining off and on all night. And Barney's scared of the rain.

The woman swings a leather bullwhip, winding up as a pitcher might, and strikes the man across the back with such force that I wince and turn to my left, facing another man in a rubber puppy mask, whose eyes inside the mask meet my own.

That's the thing about the Rubber Ball USA: Your eyes don't know where to look, and all night mine seem to be ricocheting all over the Historic Concord Exchange in South Saint Paul.

"Our event is very much the spiritual successor to the Rubber Ball produced by Mistress Jean Bardot from the '90s through the early '00s," says Vincent Valcroft, Director of Marketing & Entertainment for Rubber Ball USA, and Assistant Manager of Bondesque in Uptown Minneapolis. "In 2016, we approached Mistress Bardot and asked her if we could give new life to the Rubber Ball event she'd produced in the past. We were granted the production rights, and we produced our first Minneapolis Rubber Ball. It was one of the biggest fetish parties the Cities had seen, featuring an impressive lineup of international fetish stars, and we've kept growing since."

There are bunny masks, gas masks, masquerade masks, gimp masks, full-face leather BDSM masks studded with metal bullets. There are sensory-deprivation hoods, muzzles, folks in puppy suits being led around on leashes. There are horse bits, chastity harnesses, and all manner of exposed human flesh. There is a tall man in full (rubber) Scottish bagpiper regalia, made taller by platform shoes and towering feather plume. There are furry tails everywhere. I watch a ball-gagged girl flogged on all fours. I watch a willowy man in lingerie tied down and tickled, his ruby red stilettos writhing. There are beautiful people everywhere I look, laughing, conversing, observing, respecting each other's space and boundaries. And the freedom of sexual expression is so palpable here at the Concord you could practically distill it.

Photos by Eye On Fetish - © 2021 Gerry Koehler

I try not to ogle, and instead perform a vacant dumbshow of ennui, fixing my gaze in the middle distance, as if I've seen all this before.

I am not wearing rubber. I'm wearing a blazer over a contextually alien Hawaiian shirt, pleated black pants cropped above the ankle, and black oxfords with no socks. I mention this only because many of the people I pass look from my face to my ankles and back to my face—so often, in fact, that I start to compulsively look down at my ankles. A group of girls in bodysuits, some wearing cat ears. A man lounging on the landing in ass-less chaps. An oiled bodybuilder in nothing but a thong and bowtie and, if memory serves, a little hat. In the men's room, I nod to an elderly gentleman whose top hat has the word DADDY in metal letters across its band as another guy struggles to free himself from his rubber puppy suit. So many pairs of exposed breasts (nipples covered, however precariously, as per RBUSA's guidelines) that I feel the muscles under my left eye begin to twitch.

"The people who attend our events are so wonderful," Valcroft says, "and they often express how happy and grateful they are to be [at the Rubber Ball], and how much fun they're having. As a producer, hearing this kind of feedback is what makes it all worth it."

Over the crowded dance floor, DJs noise and Fenris drop beats vacillating between ominous/ecstatic and dreamy. There are various tables set up by local purveyors of luxury gear:

CherriTree Designs sells handmade leather corsets and other goods (including paddles stitched with words like BRAT, PRINCESS, MASTER and BITCH); Haus of Elle provides artisanal leather harnesses, collars and cuffs; Lazarus Redmayne's The Duchy, "one of the oldest and friendliest places on the web to learn about rope bondage" and one of SexualAlpha's 2020 Top 50 Kinky & BDSM Blogs, offers bondage tutorials in an upstairs corner; and the Centre for Sexual Wellness ("sex-positive, LGBTQIA+ friendly, and kink-competent") is stationed at an info booth.

And then there are the performers, whose athleticism is nothing short of astonishing. There's no cool, affected ennui here; my jaw literally goes slack. When Megan the ManEater Carter performs a series of, like, backflip/splits and repeatedly sticks the landing, I rattle my head, dazzled. And with every subsequent performer—Mistress Jean Bardot, Madame Bee, Blackryver, the internationally lauded RubberDoll—the crowd is transfixed, beaming, alight.

To me, RBUSA is not simply about sex; it's a triumph of expressive freedom, of individuality and the total absence of judgment. Or, as Valcroft puts it, "a celebration where we can all embrace the kinky, glamorous and sexy part of ourselves that we don't necessarily show day-to-day."

The drive home is peaceful, South Saint Paul's vacant streets misting. Barney greets me at the door, storm-torn and quivering. When I take him out to go potty, he keeps looking up at my face, like, "I'm cool. I already pissed in your bedroom."

Back upstairs, I crack a beer and recline on the couch in front of the TV, both dogs coiled on my lap. If there were a loved one beside me, our faces lit by HBO's aquarium glow, this would be the picture of Rockwellian domesticity. I consider my comfort zone, and how tonight its perimeter grew slightly. And I imagine all those folks at the Rubber Ball across town, still celebrating into the night, perhaps wondering when—and where to—that strange guy in the Hawaiian shirt could've disappeared. Perhaps not. ∎

COMING ATTRACTIONS | BY BRETT BURGER

Touring Broadway Is Back!

While we continue to see many of our own local theatres reopen, the return of touring Broadway is imminent. Hennepin Theatre Trust announced a jam-packed season before the pandemic hit in 2020, but was forced to reschedule everything. However, we're slowly getting there which means touring Broadway will be here before you know it. No, really—the first one's at the end of September!

The delta variant has caused many issues and thrown many plans out the door, which is why I suggest visiting hennepintheatretrust.org/broadwayticketinfo for the most up-to-date ticket information. *Cats* originally was slated for this tour, however it has been cancelled.

DISNEY'S FROZEN

Sept. 30 – Oct. 20, 2021

The story of Anna and Elsa is one that has played in probably every household across the country—whether you have kids or not—and we've all given full performances in our cars to *"Let It Go."*

When the kingdom of Arendelle becomes trapped in a never-ending winter, Anna joins forces with Kristoff, a young mountaineer, to save her sister, Queen Elsa, and the kingdom from her icy spell. With hits like *Let It Go*, *Love Is an Open Door*, and *Do You Want to Build a Snowman?*, the *Frozen* musical will be the perfect treat for Minnesotans as we not only return to the theatre but prepare for winter.

OKLAHOMA!

Nov. 9 – 14, 2021

Before I get into it, see it. Buy your tickets. Do it. Listen, I know you're thinking "But Brett, it's *Oklahoma!* Really?" Really. Even as a musical theatre connoisseur, I just saw this Rodgers & Hammerstein musical for the first time when it was on Broadway in 2019. This was billed as a new and innovative production in celebration of its 75th anniversary, and this production was different. While the songs remained the same, the feeling had changed. Less Golden Age and more gritty, dark and sexy. Set in an intimate, immersive style, in the round production, the show even served cornbread and chili during intermission. If I haven't sold you on this production yet, go listen to Damon Daunno sing *"The Surrey with the Fringe on Top."* Trust me, you'll swoon.

This version of *Oklahoma!* is described as a "stripped down" version to "reveal the dark psychological truths at its core, Daniel Fish's reorchestrated and re-imagined production of this classic…tells a story of a community circling its wagons against an outsider, and the violence of the frontier that shaped America."

ANASTASIA

December 7- 19, 2021

Anastasia is not a Broadway musical and combines the original story of both the 1956 Fox film and the 1997 animated film (one of my favorites). The story is a well-known one that takes place in Russia and is about the lost Princess Anastasia Romanov. While I'm slightly upset that some of my favorite aspects of the movie are replaced with other ideas (there's no Rasputin, which means no *In the Dark of the Night* song), I'm still fairly excited. Some of the songs in this musical still give me shivers, including *Once Upon a December* and *Journey to the Past*.

COME FROM AWAY

January 11 – 23, 2022

I love musicals, but you know what I love even more? Ninety-minute no-intermission musicals. Sometimes I get a little antsy in my seat, which is why I loved seeing *Come from Away* on Broadway a few years ago. The musical is short but full of emotion and some fantastic musical theatre moments.

Come from Away is a Canadian musical that is set a week following the 9/11 attacks. It tells the true story of what transpired when 38 planes were ordered to land unexpectedly in the small town of Gander in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. What's unique is that many of these characters are based on the actual 7,000 stranded travelers and real Gander residents.

JERSEY BOYS

February 3 – 5, 2022

A quick run, however it's been here before which is probably why it's here for only a few performances. *Jersey Boys* is a musical biography about the Four Seasons rock 'n' roll group. A delightful night for those who may have grown up with this music. This jukebox musical covers the formation, rise, success and eventual break-up of the iconic group.

PRETTY WOMAN: THE MUSICAL

February 22 – 27, 2022

When people think of *Pretty Woman*, they think "Big mistake. Big. Huge." Some also thought about this when it was turned into a musical. I haven't seen it and frankly I can't remember how critics received it when it premiered on Broadway. The musical is based on the movie of the same name and takes place in Hollywood. It centers around Vivian Ward, a sex worker who is hired by Edward Lewis, a wealthy businessman, to be his escort to several social functions. However, you guessed it, the strictly financial business arrangement slowly begins bubbling into a developing relationship.

HADESTOWN

March 15 – 20, 2022

The multi-Tony award-winning musical is coming here and I can't wait to see it again. I was lucky enough to see it a few months after it won so many Tony awards and even saw it with the original cast. I don't want to spoil anything so I'll give a very simple summary straight from the website, however I can't recommend it more.

Hadestown intertwines two mythic tales—that of young dreamers Orpheus and Eurydice, and that of King Hades and his wife Persephone—as it invites viewers on a hell-raising journey to the underworld and back.

THE PROM

April 12 – 17, 2022

All I'll say is that I hope this musical is better in person than it was as an atrocious Netflix movie. Not even my favorite—Meryl Streep—could save it from the annoying and stereotypical performance that was James Corden's. That being said, we will be seeing this show and we will be supporting it because at the root of it, it's a show about young queer love and we need more of that these days.

The musical follows four Broadway actors who are mourning the potential fall of their careers after another bust of an opening night. They travel to a small conservative town in Indiana to help a young lesbian student who was banned from bringing her girlfriend to the high school prom.

MOULIN ROUGE! THE MUSICAL

May 18 – June 5, 2022

Another musical based on a fantastic movie, this musical adaption is pretty fun. Is it absolutely groundbreaking? No. Is it still a fun night and an electrifying show to see? Absolutely. Set in Paris during the Belle Epoque at the turn of the 20th century, the musical tells the story of Christian, a young composer who falls in love with a cabaret actress, Satine. The musical, like the movie, weaves together original songs in a jukebox-style musical and even includes songs that haven't been released since the film's original premiere.

Yes, many of your favorite pop diva's songs do make an entrance at one point.

AIN'T TOO PROUD – THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE TEMPTATIONS

June 28 – July 10, 2022

Similar to Jersey Boys, this jukebox musical tells the story of the great Temptations and their rise. Featuring songs like *Baby Love, Come See About Me*, *You Can't Hurry Love* and *My Girl*, this show is bound to be a great night for anyone who grew up listening to this group. ▮

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12-18-21 • Watkins Family Hour
BLUEGRASS / FOLK

1-15-22 • Lisa Fischer
R & B

2-5-22 • Kathy Mattea & Suzy Boggus
COUNTRY

3-19-22 • David Wilcox
SINGER-SONGWRITER / FOLK

4-30-22 • Dee Dee Bridgewater & Bill Charlap
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5-7-22• Asleep at the Wheel
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EAT THE MENU | BY CARLA WALDEMAR

SIDEBAR 2.0

Cheeseburger, Dijonnaise, Pickle, Onion, French Fries.

I've heard of people being put into a medical coma….but—a restaurant? Covid's the culprit.

Last September the Surdyk clan opened sweet little Sidebar, a bistro adjoining their iconic Nordeast drink-and-deli Fountain of Life for foodies. It flourished until November, when restaurant doors slammed shut all across the city. The good news is: it's back.

And even better—a new menu from a new chef, who just happens to live right down the block. His resume includes stints at the prestigious Alinea and Next in Chicago; swanky Inn at Little Washington outside DC; and Nashville diners' darling Pinewood Social. Closer to home, he's worked at Spoon and Stable and luxe Canoe Bay in Wisconsin, before the pandemic motivated him to hunker down in his Nordeast condo. Time to un-hunker! Lucky Surdyk's. Lucky us.

Sitting at one of the bistro's sidewalk tables again, it almost feels like Paris (well, if you squint). Oh, not along the Champs-Élysées—rather, in a cozy corner off the tourist track. As you study the carte du vin, folks stroll by with designer dogs and baby strollers huge as SUVs, stopping to inspect the eclectic storefronts along the way—antiques shops, vintage wear, coffee houses, and a wine shop: Surdyk's. The wine I'm sipping called to me from the menu's well-curated list, available in 3 oz. and 6 oz. pours suitable for pairing, course by course, as well as full bottles (and only a $7 corkage fee if you've chosen a bottle from inside the store).

Sip and swirl as you inspect the kitchen's list of snacks, leading off with composed boards to share of cheeses, charcuterie or crudités ($20). Nibble on a french fry (tres Parisian) or fried cheese curd (not so much). Or summon, as I did, a platter of green garlic fritters—lightly

Beef Tartare Tostada, Smoked Mascarpone, Watermelon Radish, Cilantro.

scented, light in body, and well-served by a dipping pool of melty goat cheese fonduta: not the modest Minnesota Nice version, either, but a well-aged, nicely sharp and forward number.

The menus' Dinner section gambols from a dish of charred spring onions ($12) to a husky Peterson Farms New York strip ($25) served with grilled broccolini and black garlic steak sauce. Sidebar's popular cheeseburger ($16) returns on the new menu, occupying prime real estate on many a table during my visits. Instead, I chose my beef raw, as celebrated in a snazzy plate of carpaccio (oddly called "tartare" on this menu): silky, ruddy leaves that could almost convert a vegan with its true, sweet beef flavor, brightened by a punch from pickled ramps and a tasty topknot of Alpine cheese.

Next, the snapper crudo—silky, ivory shavings of the uncooked fish, this time accented with white asparagus, served crisply undercooked (I do prefer a few more seconds in the steamer), along with fennel and lovage oil. Good try, but not the jackpot: too white/bland in appearance, plus a composition of elements that sat politely side-by-side sans much natural chemistry.

The bigoli pasta proved both original and comforting—a good trick worked by pairing ropy bigoli with earthy morels, chewy-textured fava beans and truffled, Parm-like pecorino. Nice dish. Or summon the lumache pasta, untasted, flavored with ramp pesto, lemon breadcrumbs and Parmesan.

Three sweets ($12) are listed, starting with a creamy hunk of blue cheese brilliantly paired with whipped maple syrup. Next, yogurt mousse delivered in a huge compote layered with fennel jam and tangy rhubarb, a who-knew combo that proved an adept alliance, under a spritz of Campari and scattering of shortbread cookie crumbs (nice but overkill).

Of course, you must offer guests a chocolate number (there's a state law, I believe) and Sidebar's dark chocolate cremeux soothes and satiates exactly as it's supposed to: a nubile, not-too-sweet bar that fosters a sinful grin on your face as it melts on your tongue. It's nicely accented with hazelnut-flavored whipped cream. With it, I ordered a sip of the sparkling Spanish Portell cava and envied the chef, who didn't have far to walk home at the end of the night. ∎

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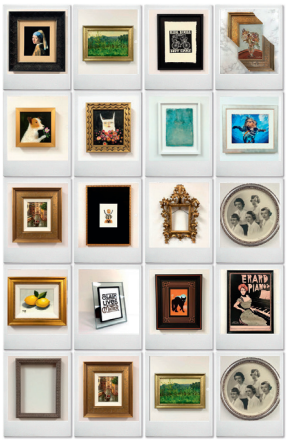

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EVERY MONTH IS PRIDE MONTH

This year's East Central Minnesota Pride will be unlike any other—for more reasons than one.

BY KASSIDY TARALA

Of course, June will always be Pride Month. But Pride isn't something that can be contained to just 30 days—it's a state of mind, a never-ending celebration of oneself. So when East Central Minnesota Pride 2021 had to be pushed back from June to September, the LGBTQ+ community wasn't too upset about it: we just get to prolong the celebration.

"Pride will continue to bring some great music from two bands—Jacob Mahon and the Salty Dogs and the Rebel Queens," says ECMN Pride committee member Julie Redpath. "And we look forward to welcoming Martina Marraccino as emcee and between-sets entertainment. The most noticeable difference for this 16th Pride is that it's being held in September rather than traditionally being held during Pride Month—the first Sunday in June."

Redpath says their plan was to switch to the first Saturday in June rather than hosting the event on a Sunday, as it has been done in the past. Also, to allow for social distancing and COVID-19 health protocols, they're switching from classic picnic food grilled on-site—burgers, brats, and the trimmings—to hiring a few food trucks. "For sure we'll have trucks offering tacos and BBQ ribs and some awesome sweet treats from a local coffee house," she adds.

In the mix of this year's food trucks are Burnsville-based Tacos Tacuba, Brooklyn Park-based Run Tell That BBQ, Pine City-based Cabin Coffees. Minneapolis-based Sandy's Grill & Italian Ice will be parked a block north at Three Twenty Brewing Co., 135 5th St. SE.

"We have an exciting boost in community involvement this year," Redpath says. "Following the Pride in the Park music portion (1:00 – 5:00 p.m.), at 7:00 p.m., the Highway 61 Film Festival will be showing four short LGBTQ+-themed films at the Pine Center for the Arts building located across the street from Robin-

Continued on page 18

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Tacos Tacuba in Robinson Park

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More information at
www.EastCentralMinnesotaPride.org

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Photos by Phil Schroeder

son Park. Also, across from Robinson Park at the other end of the street, Froggy's Bar and Grill will be hosting a drag show at 9:00 p.m."

Redpath says that, while at first she was reluctant to make the switch from Sunday to Saturday for this year's Pride events, it seems that changing to Pride on Saturday has made a difference to downtown Pine City businesses.

"Hopefully it'll turn out to be good for business and a lot of fun to be involved this year," she says. "Froggy's and the film festival are new participants. Three Twenty Brewing has offered support and Pride specials for several years. I think people are ready to gather together and have fun. Perhaps this is the time the local businesses felt it was worth their energy and effort to continue the party into the evening with an eye toward including more people."

In addition to the annual Pride activities, this year both the Minnesota Department of Health and Pine County Health and Human Services are collaborating to provide COVID-19 vaccines to those interested at East Central Minnesota Pride on that Saturday afternoon, September 18.

Local businesses and homes that would like to show their support can contact members of the Pride Committee or the Pine City Area Chamber of Commerce for an "All Are Welcome Here" sticker or rainbow flag to display on their storefronts or homes.

And, as Redpath says, "All Are Welcome Here" truly is the message the folx of ECMN Pride want the community to take away from the event.

"All are welcome," she affirms. "Come celebrate STRONGER TOGETHER."For more information about ECMN Pride, visit eastcentralminnesotapride.org ▮

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Pride & Peace Walk - GRRL & Lake George
Wed, Sept 15th, 5:30p. Local faith leaders to rally for LGBTQ+ peace.

Pride Trivia - Beaver Island Brewing
Thur, Sept 16th, 6p. Join us for pride-themed trivia.

Pride Burlesque Show - Red Carpet
Thur, Sept 16th, 9p. Presented by Nakita Kat Productions.

Youth Pride Dance Party - Attwood Ballroom
Fri, Sept 17th, 5-7p. A dance party for middle and high school youth.

All-Ages Drag Show - Attwood Ballroom
Fri, Sept 17th, 7:30p. Come see a fantastic show by the SCSU Drag Troupe.

Pride in the Park - Lake George
Sat, Sept 18th, 11a-3p. Join us for our pride in the park gathering!

Puppy Parade - Lake George
Sat, Sept 18th. Enter your dog! Prizes for best costumes!

Drag Show 21+ - River's Edge Convention Center
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Pride After Party - Red Carpet
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Pride Parade - Downtown
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CHANNELING THAT INNER FIRE

BY LINDA RAINES

Fire. There's something magical, *primal* about it—the foremost element, the impetus for humans taking that first important step into civilization. The ancient Greeks said that the Titan Prometheus stole fire from the gods to give to humans, and that it was considered one of the most precious and valuable gifts given, coveted by the Olympians who thought it only worthy of the immortals.

Metal is equally potent—the element that elevated humans from relying on simple stone tools, and allowed them to create pieces that were both beautiful and deadly.

Flickering flames, the slow march of bubbling lava, the radiating waves of heat from desert sand, the sinuous flow of molten steel… it can be mesmerizing to watch, to lose yourself in its power and magnetism. Equally mesmerizing is talking with someone whose passion in life involves blending those ancient elements of fire and metal.

Seven Bailey—metal fabricator, artist, welder—has that passion, and it shows in their creations and collaborations, two of which can be seen right here in Minneapolis. Seven helped in the construction of artist Tristan Al-Haddad's massive 10-ton sculpture *Nimbus*, which is currently in place above Nicollet Mall's Theater in the Round, located in front of the Minneapolis Central Library. Another collaborative sculpture is entitled *Purple Raindrop*, which was inspired by Prince's *Purple Rain*. Twin Cities visual artist and Phillips neighborhood resident Esther Osayande designed the seductively curving metal piece, and Seven, along with fellow female welder Heather Doyle, brought it to life in steel.

I spoke with Seven about their path in life, and how it's led to becoming part of the new Netflix competition series *Metal Shop Masters*, in which a select group of metal artists cut, torch and weld steel creations in hopes of walking away with the $50,000 grand prize.

Photo by Cyril Davis

WHERE DID YOU GROW UP, GO TO SCHOOL? WE'D LOVE TO GET SOME BACKGROUND ON YOU FOR OUR READERS WHO DON'T KNOW YOU, OR DON'T KNOW YOU WELL.

I grew up in Winona, MN. I attended school at Winona Senior High and graduated in '99. I had three passions as a teen: karate, film and art. I focused mostly on mixed media but really dove into photography and film as a senior. After I graduated, I attended St. Mary's University, where I majored in Studio Art with an emphasis on metal sculpture. I was dealing with a broken heart at the time—I had just lost my first love to a tragic car accident. I had a difficult time applying myself to basic studies, so I dropped out after my first year. I firmly believed at the time that it was what was needed for me to grow, and that if I were to be an artist, I wouldn't need a degree to accomplish it.

DID YOU ALWAYS WANT TO GO INTO THE FIELD OF WELDING AS A CAREER? WHAT PIQUED YOUR INTEREST IN THIS VOCATION?

I was an only child for most of the time I was growing up, and I was always entertaining myself. I found that drawing, painting, and building things brought me joy. There were a few pivotal moments that I believe contributed to my love of welding; these moments also helped me to open my eyes and learn more about what it meant to be young and queer.

The first moment was seeing the movie *Flashdance* as a kid. I remember being so fascinated by the raw sexuality in the movie, and seeing how unapologetic Alex was about taking up space after really coming into her own. It wasn't just that she was able to take up space as a woman welder in a male-dominated industry; it was also that she was able to be seen as a biracial woman in the very white world of professional dance. It was owning her art and body while working in the club, showing a side of sex work that many had not seen. Of course, the movie is very dated and has flaws, but as a kid, there were so many things that I wanted to know and do after watching it. I always say that my life has imitated art, since I'm a Black welder who happens to be married to a burlesque performer and a very proud sex worker.

The second moment relating to my queer roots (at this point I feel like I'm giving you six degrees of separation surrounding the

Continued on page 22

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impact of film and my queerness) was when *Bound* came out in 1996, and I was 15 years old. The character Corky had the worst name, but embodied all that I wanted to be. So I started moving into my butch identity and became fascinated by all things Gina Gershon, including this noir movie called *Palmetto*, in which she portrayed a metal artist. I think it was at that point I thought, This is it: I can weld, do art and be queer.

YOU'VE DONE SEVERAL LARGE METAL ART PIECES. WHAT PROMPTED OR LED YOU TOWARDS THE ARTISTIC SIDE OF METAL WORK?

That would be me meeting the person I lovingly refer to as my "work wife," Heather Doyle. She is the Artistic Director of the Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center (CAFAC) and the founder of Industryelle, a group that collaborates on metal art here in the Twin Cities. I had been working as a welder and fabricator for almost 10 years when we met. I asked if she needed help with anything and she brought me in on a project. We've been together ever since. We complement one another so perfectly—she's about vision, movement and fluidity, and I lean towards precision, functionality and the overall execution of things. I believe it's been her artistic vision—which really highlights the impact of metal art—that has truly inspired, shaped and motivated me.

DO YOU STILL TEACH AT DUNWOODY? WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT TEACHING, OR GETTING PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS INTERESTED IN THE FIELD?

I no longer teach at Dunwoody, but I do teach advanced fabrication classes at CAFAC. Teaching has a big part of my heart; I love sharing knowledge about welding and fabrication with others. It's a gift to possess these skills, and I firmly believe in sharing them to empower others to make them their own. Welding and metal fabrication has given me a beautiful career path that continues to evolve. It's bigger than just being a welder. My path has gone from welder, to manager, instructor, welding inspector, artist, and back again. Now it's 2021 and I'm about to be on Netflix! I couldn't have predicted that. I can say, however, that I plan on continuing to use any platform I have to share this world, and my experience, with others. I remain focused on reaching marginalized folx. There are endless opportunities in the world of metal, and the more visible we all are, the more we can reach out and support one another.

HOW DID YOU GET CHOSEN FOR *METAL SHOP MASTERS*? DID YOU APPLY, OR WERE YOU NOMINATED BY SOMEONE?

I was contacted by a producer, and to this day, I have no idea how they found out about me or why they asked me to be a part of the show. I originally wanted to turn the opportunity down. I had to sit with what me being on the show represents. To me, it's important to be visible. I haven't seen many Black, trans, nonbinary queers in the welding world—let alone on TV. It's important for us to keep taking up space, sharing our experiences, and to keep on shining. I definitely did it for the culture.

Photo courtesy of Seven Bailey

I OFTEN WATCH *FORGED IN FIRE*, AND ENJOY SEEING THE CAMARADERIE BETWEEN THE COMPETITORS, AS OPPOSED TO, SAY, THE BACKSTABBING ON SHOWS LIKE *SURVIVOR*. THEY GENUINELY SEEM TO GET ALONG, AND DON'T TAKE PLEASURE IN WATCHING A COMPETITOR'S PROJECT BREAK OR NOT MAKE THE CUT. DID YOU FIND THAT THERE WAS A LOT OF SUPPORT BETWEEN COMPETITORS ON *METAL SHOP MASTERS*, EVEN THOUGH EVERYONE IS ULTIMATELY HOPING TO BE THE WINNER?

I had the opportunity to meet six people who I now get to call my family. We all have different backstories and experiences in the industry, and we're still all on a group chat.

I most recently met up in Alabama with badass Leah Aripotch to work on the Mothers of Gynecology Monument (www.anarchalucybetsey.org), which was created by artist Michelle Browder. It was an absolute gift to be able to collaborate with an artist of Leah's caliber. While we were down there, our brothers from the show met up with us, as they were also collaborating on a project down in Louisiana. I think it's so wonderful that the show brought us together and that we became family to one another. I love that we continue to connect and create together.

YOU'VE WORKED ON TWO VERY SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT PIECES; ONE HERE IN THE CITIES, AND ONE DOWN IN ALABAMA. TELL ME ABOUT THOSE, AND WHAT YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN HELPING TO BRING THEM TO FRUITION MEANT TO YOU.

I don't seek these projects; they tend to find me. Systemic abuse, and murder of Black and Indigenous people is happening every single day. It's important to have a voice now more than ever—this generation refuses to stay silent about the social injustices of BIPOC history and the modern day experience in the U.S. Art is a constant visual reminder of that; where we were, where we are, and where we are going. For example, in Alabama there's a statue in front of their capital building of James Marion Sims. Sims is celebrated as the "Father of Modern Gynecology"; people don't realize that he tortured enslaved women by performing crude experiments on them without anesthesia. Sims would then offer the procedure to wealthy white women who were sedated. Artist Michelle Browder had heard of my work and reached out to me for help bringing a more fitting monument to Montgomery in response to the real truth behind what Sims did. She lovingly titled them "*The Mothers of Gynecology*." In July, I took a team of women down there to give body and face crafted from donated metal and gynecological instruments to these women. People will see this monument and hopefully bring light to Anarcha, Lucy and Betsey, who are the epitome of resilience—they were Black women who will not be forgotten.

At home I was reached out to help re-create the fist in George Floyd Square (GFS) that Jordan Powell-Karis created during the uprising. The community felt there was a need to construct it out of something that could not be burned—obviously metal was the clear choice. I had a little over a week to assemble a team and start fabrication, as we were to do the install on MLK Day. Once I had a full team of volunteers we worked together to get it done in just four days. The GFS community then came together and erected it within 40 minutes from start to finish. It is still standing, as we're still asking for a list of demands to be met. It will continue to be there as it is the "Heart" of the square.

I'll continue to use my skills to bring important stories to light, support my community, create healing spaces and share the beautiful world of metal fabrication. My mission in life is to support and empower others—metal art just happens to be my vessel.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PERSON WHO'S INTERESTED IN MAKING METAL WORK AND WELDING A VOCATION—EITHER IN THE TECHNICAL FIELD OR THE ARTISTIC FIELD?

NETWORK! Building a strong network of humans really helps shape the world you want to cultivate around you. Grab onto opportunities that speak to you, and don't pass up opportunities out of fear.

If you're interested in getting into the world of welding, art, or both, please feel free to reach out to me! Check out Dunwoody College of Technology if you're interested in going the academic route. If you're leaning towards art, stop by the Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center and get connected with an amazing community of educators and artists ready to share the gifts of heat, spark and flame with metal. ∎

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ST. PAUL ART CRAWL: 30 YEARS OF SHOWCASING ART

BY SHANE LUECK

Art enthusiasts rejoice! The St. Paul Art Crawl is back for 2021 and celebrates 30 years of supporting local artists, but this year brings a major change that allows visitors to take in even more art, galleries and performances.

What traditionally would have been a single weekend travelling through St. Paul's neighborhoods will be spread across September through December. Each St. Paul "district" will essentially have their own weekend for artists to showcase their creations.

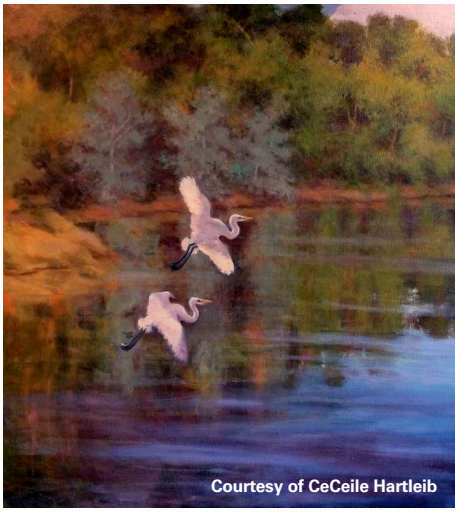
"The whole idea is to give people more chances to look at art and to look at more artists, because it was overwhelming to go to all of them in one weekend," says Barbara Evan, a resident artist and planning committee member. "That means you can look longer; you don't feel harried. You can take your time looking at the art. I see it as a positive thing."

Evan represents the Harriet Island Artists, who will be hosting visitors the weekend of October 8–10. "We're calling it Art on the Island, even though we're not located right on Harriet

Barbara Evan's studio. Courtesy of Barbara Evan

Andrea Okeson's studio. Courtesy of Andrea Okeson

Courtesy of Barbara Evan



Courtesy of CeCeile Hartleib

Courtesy of Barbara Evan

Courtesy of Susan Mikutowski

Island," Evan says. "But then, Harriet Island isn't really an island, so we decided to stretch it a bit."

The artists are coming out of a year of uncertainty as the repercussions of the pandemic and building sales have forced many of them to move from one space to another. "We just have to adapt is what it boils down to," Evan says, noting that moving spaces into a renovated building has actually worked out well for the artists.

Now, Harriet Island Artists are once again able to open up their work spaces and invite guests to view their work, eat, drink, dance and enjoy live performances. Art on the Island will feature open art studios, live music, interactive art demonstrations, food trucks, live performances, and tango demonstrations all in one place.

Guests can wander the fourth and fifth floors of the newly remodeled Farwell Ozmun Kirk Warehouse to see painters, drawing artists, and more showcasing diverse styles from traditional to contemporary and everything in between. The building, located at 106 West Water Street, is in process of being renamed to "Warehouse 2", but is still on maps and searchable as "ACVR Warehouse."

"We've been working for two years now and we're ready to have visitors," Evan says. "We'd love to see people and can't wait to show everyone our work." ▮

Art on the Island
October 8–10
106 West Water Street, St Paul
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facebook.com/HarrietIslandArtists

SERVE OUR SOCIETY | BY MIKE MARCOTTE

Queer Grace Community

A church for queers, by queers

Religious trauma is real, especially within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Queer Grace Community, based in Minneapolis, exists to help Christians and Christian-adjacent individuals make sense of their lives and their faith.

"A lot of us are post-evangelical and dealing with religious trauma from being told to deny ourselves and our identities," says Pastor Emmy Kegler, a Co-Leader of Queer Grace Community, or QGC, "but we're still looking for connection to God and to a church community in some form."

"A lot of our members have known what it's like to be denied access to their religious community or condemned by family," Kegler continues. "The loss of community when coming out is one of the reasons we focus on social events and creating community connections."

QGC holds four events a month, usually on Sundays, including worship, social events, game night and bible study.

Queer Grace Community typically hosts a board game night at Mojo Coffee Gallery in Minneapolis, giving people a chance to connect. Photo courtesy of Queer Grace Community

Worship is held Sunday evenings so members of QGC can maintain a connection with their home congregations Sunday mornings. QGC services include band-led music, scripture, reflection time, communion and fellowship.

In addition to worship, QGC organizes a free garage sale and clothing swap every few months. "We strive to provide a space where folks can try on and take home gender-affirming clothes and accessories for free in a non-gendered space," says QGC Co-Leader Emily Szeliga.

Photos courtesy of Queer Grace Community

At Mojo Coffee Gallery in Minneapolis, QGC hosts a board game night. "We purposefully hold it outside of the church because we want it to be a way for those who may be uncomfortable in a church setting to still be able to participate in the community," Szeliga says.

THE GENESIS OF QGC

Queer Grace Community is supported by Grace Lutheran Church in Northeast Minneapolis.

QGC got its start in 2017 when a member of Grace Lutheran approached Pastor Kegler, who is a Pastor at Grace Lutheran, about creating a space for LGBTQIA+ Christians to connect.

"There are so many affirming churches in the Twin Cities," Kegler says, "but a lot of them are mainline Protestant and may have certain liturgical practices that feel alien to post-evangelicals. We wanted to have a space where we could connect without strict denominational affiliation or membership, but still give people the option to maintain a connection with their home congregations."

Today, more than 30 people regularly attend one or more QGC event. "Some members go to every worship, and some members never set foot in the church and only go to community events and culture nights," Szeliga says. "All are welcome and accepted community members. We aim to hold space for whoever wants it, however they need it."

Grace Lutheran Church is the host congregation for Queer Grace Community and helps fund their mission. While QGC is a ministry of Grace Lutheran, you do not need to be a member of Grace to attend QGC events.

"FULLY MYSELF"

A Queer Grace Community member named Emily has been a part of the community since 2018. She plays music during the evening worship services.

"The vibe is relaxed, friendly and welcoming," she says. "Emmy is a really inspiring pastor and her sermons are full of uplifting messages."

Pastor Emmy believes what happens outside of worship is just as special as what hap-

pens during the service.

Queer Grace Community offers worship, Bible study, game night, and social events for Christians and Christian-adjacent LGBTQIA+ individuals. Photo courtesy of Queer Grace Community

"I think the hour we sit around for after worship and just chat and connect is as holy as what happens in worship," Kegler says, "because it's deeply healing and restorative to find community again and hear your story reflected in others'."

As for Pastor Kegler's fellow Co-Leader, Emily Szeliga is very proud of the space they've created.

"I first came to a bible study with a couple friends, and instantly fell in love with the space," Szeliga says. "As a queer neurodivergent person in previous religious spaces, I always felt like I needed to hold back in order to fit in. At QGC, I know I can be fully myself. I've learned so much about others, but also so much about myself. QGC has allowed me the space to explore and grow in my faith in a way I never thought possible."

All the while, Queer Grace Community leaders realize that members are at different steps in their journey with their faith and their identity.

"I and my co-leaders work hard to recognize that not everyone who comes to QGC events can be open about it in their circles of family and friends," Kegler says, "so we try to be careful about photos posted, people tagged on Instagram, what names we use where, and so on."

GET CONNECTED

Like so many parts of life, COVID-19 impacted QGC.

"The pandemic definitely changed the shape of our community, and we're all still coming back from it in different ways," Pastor Kegler says. "We're seeing a hit to attendance, but we're also seeing a lot of new people who did some deep thinking while in social isolation and are looking for a place to connect more honestly with themselves and God."

To see a list of upcoming Queer Grace Community events, you can Like their Facebook page or head to their website, www.queergracecommunity.com. While on their website, you can sign up to receive email updates or donate to support their community. ▮

Mike Marcotte is an executive producer at KSTP-TV. You can read more of his profiles on Minnesota organizations benefitting the LGBTQ community on his website, www.givemethemike.com.

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OUR RIDES | BY RANDY STERN

Acura: Tuned Into the Community

We like to see ourselves in social media doing the things we love. That includes automotive enthusiasm and how we express our love for our vehicles.

During June of this year, Acura featured three LGBTQ owners and enthusiasts in a social media campaign that focused on their story with the brand. It was part of their "Tuned by Culture" campaign that focused on the diversity of the people who enjoy their vehicles.

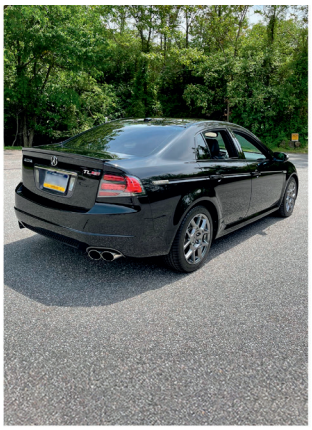
The essence of the campaign was based on how Acura owners have made a statement with their vehicles. Part of it is rooted in the tuner culture that Acura and its parent company—American Honda Motor Co., Inc.—embraces.

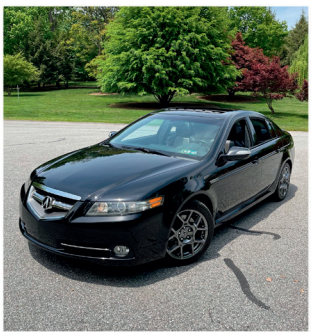
"So much of our community on our social channels are those very loyal, very passionate tuners," explains Allie Coulter, the Manager, Social Media Marketing, American Honda Motor Co., Inc. "We want to make sure that we honor them and have them be part of that conversation. We thought that it was a nice way to kind of bring together, have a way to celebrate our fans and the voices of our fans, and really how our vehicles, their love for those, and specifically modifying them top their particular needs and desires, really brings people together."

Photo courtesy of Tyson Hugie

From that point, Acura's social media team lined up three enthusiasts for their June campaign: Tyson Hugie of Phoenix, Arizona; James Shine of Charlotte, North Carolina; and Keith Rodes of York, Pennsylvania represent three different takes on Acura ownership within their LGBTQ identities.

Photo courtesy of Keith Rodes and Sofyan Bey





Each of these people show their enthusiasm for the brand that demonstrates their expression of it within their community. For Rodes, it is his black Acura TL Type S. For Shine, it is a tuned and lowered TLX. For Hugie, it is a collection of Acura models from the early 1990s. That collection includes two second-generation Integras, two second-generation Legends—a sedan and a coupe—a Vigor, and a first-generation NSX.

The three people chosen for this campaign were sourced through what Coulter called "social listening." "Social [media] really should be an engagement," explains Coulter. "It should be a conversation."

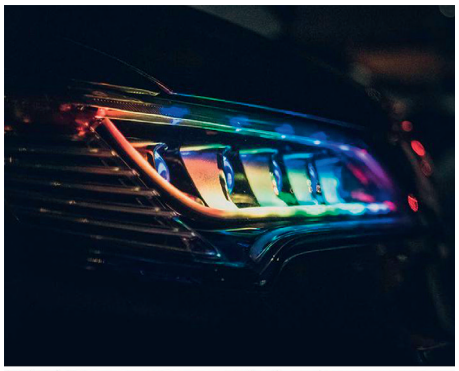
The conversation comes from the quotes given for each social media post. In his post, Shine said that he "always felt that [he] didn't belong in a lot of places. The car community definitely helped me shake that." In Rodes' case, he said on his post that he was "just so happy to feel at home in the car community and to have a safe space."

These are true statements for a lot of LGBTQ automotive enthusiasts trying to fit into one of many clubs, events and cliques.

However, Hugie gives this perspective in his post: "When you're a car fan, you're family, whether you're part of the [LGBTQ] community or not." Hugie also added in his post: "That's what I love about being a car fanatic…it is the one overarching obsession we all share."

How has this campaign been received on

Acura's social media channels? Coulter reports that the month of June was Acura's best period for social content. According to Coulter, the campaign "outperformed our target by about 20%. And we loved seeing how it really exceeded our expectations in [post engagement]. We loved seeing the conversation and the support within the comments."



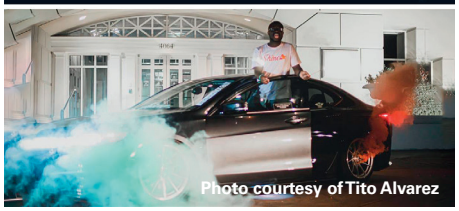


Photo courtesy of Tito Alvarez

The ultimate payoff for this campaign is to bridge these three Acura owners and enthusiasts with others who may have seen these posts on their social media feeds. "We like to be a positive force in society recognizing and celebrating our customers," Coulter says, "the unique cultures, and the communities they're a part of, and how our vehicles are able to do that. It's very important for us, especially in social [media] where we have that unique ability to listen and to talk and engage with our fans and followers."

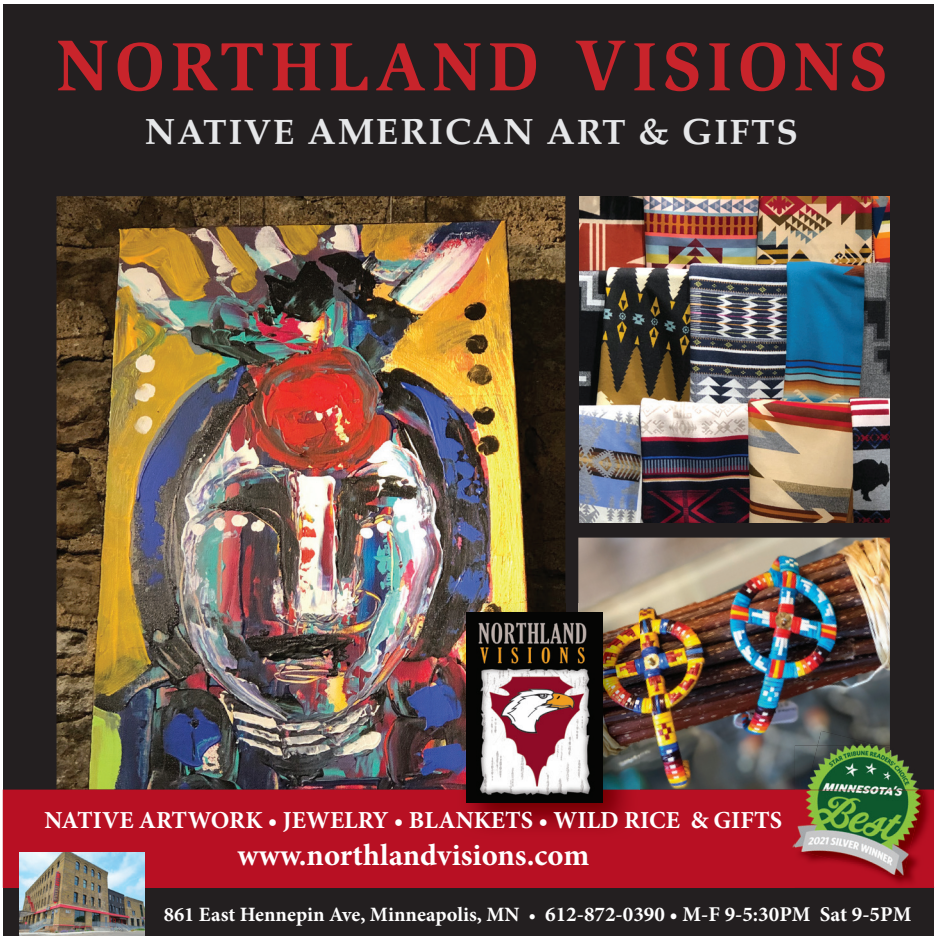
Coulter further explains that Acura's customers "made an investment in the Acura brand. This is a great way for us to hear their stories [and] tell their stories. It's one of the ways that we can strengthen that relationship with all different kinds of our customers."

If you see yourself in an advertisement or on social media, would that solidify your choice in your next vehicle? If you know of other automotive enthusiasts who are LGBTQ, would you like to connect with them—regardless of the type of vehicle they own? Would you even like to hang out with them?

Photo courtesy of Tito Alvarez

Thanks to the passion exhibited by Hugie, Rodes and Shine, this social media campaign became a portal for LGBTQ Acura owners and enthusiasts to celebrate their love for their vehicles. It was also a conversation starter.

Shall we continue this conversation? Let's hope it never stops. ∎



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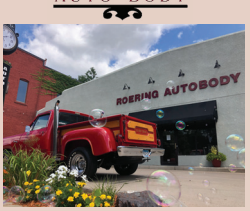

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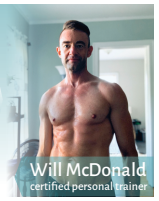

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SKIRTING THE ISSUES | BY ELLEN KRUG

OSSEO

There are many ways to change the world. For example, some take to the streets and march with sheer numbers demanding change. Others stand on soapboxes, yelling into microphones with the hope that the powerful will listen.

Still others—a small minority—resort to violence and destruction, something that can scar a society's soul.

I attempt to foster change differently. I believe in the power of human-to-human contact and the art of touching hearts. It's this philosophy that's had me in locales like Oxford, Mississippi, Fort Hall, Idaho and Alexandria, Minnesota—places that aren't on anyone's list as venues for making the world better.

I've found that it's so much easier to reach people when you're on their turf, respectfully sharing ideas and inviting listeners in. Sometimes, the invitation needs to be radical.

All of this gets me to a mid-July Tuesday evening when I stood in front of the Osseo (Minnesota) School District school board as it was set to vote on adopting a transgender and nonbinary-affirming policy. A board member had asked me to be there to comment on the policy and even though I would have only three minutes to speak (this is the way it works in most public meetings of any kind), I was happy to do as requested.

In Minnesota, the state Department of Education mandates that school districts protect transgender and nonbinary students from bullying, and requires that schools allow all students to use restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to their gender identity.

Given this, one would expect that passing a gender-affirming policy would have been a no-brainer for the Osseo school board. However, that wasn't the case—a number of parents and concerned citizens, along with a couple board members, opposed the policy, citing how young, straight, cisgender kids might be turned gay or transgender with a more accepting school atmosphere.

If only it were that easy.

Thus, I sat near the front and listened as a half-dozen people rose to denounce the proposed policy. The naysayers included parents, religious leaders, and one person who reported that they had been transgender for several decades before God intervened to help them to understand that they weren't trans. That person spoke passionately about de-transitioning and how there really is no such thing as being "transgender"; instead, trans people are simply confused and misguided.

It was when a second religious leader spoke that my heart began to hurt—not because he opposed the policy, but rather because of what he shared about his personal story.

The man related that growing up, he was labeled as being gay and bullied in school as a result. He explained that the trauma made him believe that he was gay, and for a decade after high school he identified as a gay man. Again, God intervened, and he smiled broadly as he shared that he now identifies as straight, complete with a wife and three children. He implored the board to reject the policy because of how it might influence impressionable minds.

I immediately felt this man's pain and his story touched me. How horrible, I thought. No one should ever have to endure such trauma—even someone who may be intolerant of me.

When my name was called, I went to the podium and said that I favored the proposed gender-affirming policy because it would give young humans breathing room to figure out their own sexuality and gender identity. I also reminded the board that its mission was to inspire students to engage in a lifetime of learning; if so, that learning should begin with students understanding themselves.

At that point, I turned to the audience and spoke to the man/religious leader who had shared about being bullied. I said, "Your story hurt my heart and I'm so sorry that you went through that. I would welcome the opportunity to talk to you and to your congregation to see if we could find our commonalities and perhaps bridge what divides us."

My words were grounded in compassion—to the point where I pushed back tears. There was no reason to shame or "other" the man, or even those like him. We'll never get to where we need to be with shaming or guilting.

I sat down and listened to others who followed me, some pro, some con. When the comment period was over, I rose to leave. The man/religious leader I had addressed, who was in the back row, got up and approached me.

I stopped and whispered, "I meant what I said. I'm sorry that you went through that."

The man pulled back and offered, "I could tell that you were sincere, Ellie. Thank you."

He asked for my business card and said that he'd reach out.

I've not yet heard from the man, but maybe it doesn't matter. The 50 other people in the room got a glimpse of what pushing for radical change looks like.

P.S. The Osseo school board adopted the gender-affirming policy. ∎

Ellen (Ellie) Krug, the author of *Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change*, speaks and trains on diversity and inclusion topics; visit www.elliekrug.com where you can also sign-up for her monthly e-newsletter, *The Ripple*. She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com.

JAMEZ SITINGS | BY JAMEZ L. SMITH

MANGINA MONOLOGUES I - V (TALKING OUT MY ASS)

MM-V

"Are you a top,

or a bottom?"

OK … you need to get new reading material, hon,

cuz that line of thinking is played out.

Are you a top

or a bottom?

Do you give

or receive?

french

or greek?

active

or passive?

man

or mouse?

Are you straight or gay?

dyke

or lesbian?

Trans?

How Queer.

Faggot?

Breeder?

Negro?

Afro?

That line of thinking

is played out.

I Am Jaméz.

Thank you.

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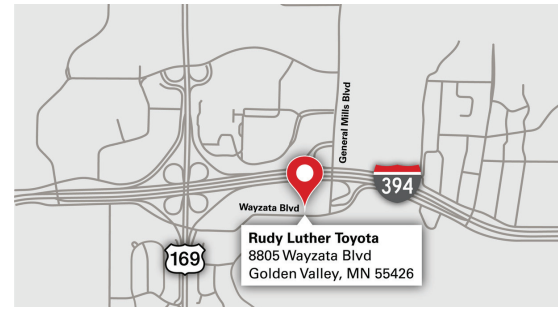

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